

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T JIDDA 7224

EXDIS

FOR UNDER SECRETARY SISCO FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MARR, SA

SUBJECT: U.S. ARMS FOR SAUDI ARABIA

REF: A) JIDDA 7078; B) STATE 245094; C) STATE 253183

1. COUNSELOR ISA SABBAGH AND I HAD A LONG MEETING WITH PRINCE SULTAN, SAUDI MINISTER OF DEFENSE, OCT 26. I TOLD HIM I WAS SOMEWHAT CONFUSED BY HIS LETTER OF SEPT 17 AND WONDERED IF WE COULD GO OVER THEIR NOTES OF PRINCE FAHD'S MEETING WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER. HE READILY AGREED AND SHOWED US THE FILE. THEIR NOTES CORRESPONDED PRECISELY TO THOSE PARTS OF HIS LETTER REFERRING TO THE SECRETARY'S STATEMENTS. SULTAN SAID, MOREOVER, THAT HIS LETTER HAD BEEN CLEARED BY PRINCE FAHD AND PRINCE SAUD IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE MEETINGS AND THE LETTER WAS IN FULL ACCORD WITH FRESH AND PERSONAL RECOLLECTION OF WHAT HAD BEEN SAID. FINALLY, NOTES HAD BEEN TAKEN IN BOTH ENGLISH AND ARABIC AND THERE WAS NO DOUBT IN ANYONE'S MIND AS TO WHAT THE SECRETARY SAID.

2. THERE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN ONLY ONE POINT WHERE THERE COULD HAVE BEEN A LEGITIMATE MISUNDERSTANDING - CONCERNING THE TOW MISSILES. THE SECRETARY, ACCORDING TO EXTRACT FROM HIS OWN MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION SAID: "WE WILL WORK OUT A SCHEDULE FOR DELIVERY

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NEXT YEAR AT THE RATE OF 16 LAUNCHERS AND 50 TO 100

MISSILES PER MONTH. THIS MEANS YOU WILL HAVE ALL YOU HAVE ORDERED IN A YEAR AFTER DELIVERIES BEGIN." THE SAUDIS ADD ONLY THAT THE DELIVERIES WILL BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING OF 1976." THEY COULD HAVE JUST ASSUMED THAT SINCE THE INITIAL DELIVERY WAS TO BEGIN NOW AND THE FINAL DELIVERY IS TO BE COMPLETED WITH A YEAR, THIS MEANS THE NEXT CALENDAR YEAR, NOT CALENDAR 1977. ACCORDING TO THE SECRETARY'S OWN MEMCON, HE DID NOT SAY THAT DELIVERIES WOULD NOT BEING UNTIL DECEMBER 1976.

3. THE MOST SERIOUS DISCREPANCIES WERE IN THE STATEMENTS ABOUT THE DELIVERY TIMES OF 894 APC'S AND 150 M-60 TANKS. THE DIFFERENCES ARE WIDE AND CLEAR:

A) ATHERTON'S LETTER TO ELLSWORTH ABOUT THE APC'S SAYS: "464 TO BE PROVIDED, WITH DELIVERIES PROGRAMMED TO BEGIN IN JUNE 1977 (AS OUTLINED IN THE ENCLOSED PAPER); THE REMAINING 430 TO BE PROVIDED, WITH DELIVERY TIMES TO BE DISCUSSED WITH THE SAG;" AND ON THE M-60 TANKS: "150 TO BE PROVIDED, WITH DELIVERIES PROGRAMMED TO BEGIN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1978 (AS OUTLINED IN THE ENCLOSED PAPER)."

B) THE SECRETARY SAID, ACCORDING TO EXTRACT FROM HIS MEMCON WITH CROWN PRINCE FAHD, "WITH RESPECT TO YOUR REQUEST FOR 894 APC'S AND 150 M-60 TANKS, WE AGREE IN PRINCIPLE AND ARE PREPARED TO ACCELERATE THE DELIVERY TIME, BUT THERE WILL STILL BE A LEAD TIME PROBLEM - IN SOME CASES AS MUCH AS TWO YEARS. I SUGGEST OUR MILITARY PEOPLE DISCUSS THE DETAILS. I HAVE REDUCED THE LEAD TIME FROM 4-6 YEARS TO TWO YEARS."

C) THE SAUDI PERCEPTION OF THE SECRETARY'S REMARKS IS THAT DELIVERY IS TO BE COMPLETED IN TWO YEARS RATHER THAN TO COMMENCE IN TWO YEARS TIME.

4. I HAVE DISCUSSED THIS MATTER WITH GENERAL AHMANN. WE BELIEVE THERE IS NO GRACEFUL WAY OUT OF THE TOW PROBLEM. IF DELIVERY IN FACT CANNOT RPT NOT BEGIN UNTIL THE END OF 1976, WE WILL JUST HAVE  
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TO TELL THE SAUDIS THERE WAS A MISUNDERSTANDING. HOWEVER, WE CAN ALSO EXPLAIN THAT IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME UNTIL THE TEAM CAN BE FULLY TRAINED ON THE 50 LAUNCHERS AND 500 MISSILES THAT ARE TO BE DELIVERED BEFORE THE END OF THIS YEAR. THEREFORE, IN EFFECT, THEY WILL NOT RPT NOT HAVE LOST ANY TIME.

5. THE SAME ARGUMENT MIGHT BE USED ON THE DELIVERIES

OF THE APC'S AND THE TANKS, I.E. THE SAUDIS WILL NEED TRAINING TIME; PART OF THE ORDER WILL BE DELIVERED SOON, THE REMAINDER AFTER THE SAUDIS HAVE BEEN TRAINED TO USE THEM. HOWEVER, THE SECRETARY'S STATEMENTS WERE BRIEF AND TO THE POINT AND THE SAUDIS WILL CERTAINLY QUOTE THEM. THEY WILL ALSO WANT THE EQUIPMENT ON HAND AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

6. I HAVE NOT GIVEN THE SAUDIS ANY OF THE GOOD NEWS IN REF B, E.G. DELIVERY OF THE DRAGON. THIS SHOULD BE SAVED UNTIL THE HIGH-LEVEL TEAM COMES OUT, IF INDEED THE MATTER IS TO BE HANDLED IN THIS MANNER.

7. FINALLY, YOU WILL RECALL THAT THE SECRETARY SAID SEVERAL TIMES THAT HE HAD OVERCOME THE RESISTANCE IN THE PENTAGON; HE HAD CUT THROUGH THE RED TAPE IN THE PENTAGON TO GET THIS ARMS PACKAGE. AND HE CLOSED BY TELLING THEM IF THEY HAD ANY PROBLEM IN THE FUTURE WITH ARMS ORDERS THEY SHOULD COME DIRECTLY TO HIM FOR SOLUTIONS; HE COULD OVERCOME PENTAGON OPPOSITION BECAUSE HE WAS NOT ONLY SECRETARY OF STATE BUT WAS THE PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR. THE SAUDIS WILL SURELY AVAIL THEMSELVES OF THIS OFFER NOW.  
AKINS

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